

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE VICE OF
G A M I N G,
AS THEY AFFECT
THE WELFARE OF INDIVIDUALS,
AND
THE STABILITY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT,
CONSIDERED :

A S E R M O N,
PREACHED
In the CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF WINCHESTER.

By THOMAS RENNELL, D. D.
Master of the T E M P L E.

*Crescit et serpit quotidie malum ; jam majus est quam
ut capere id privata fortuna possit—ad summum
reipublicæ spectat.*

LIVY.

THE THIRD EDITION.



• B A T H •

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THE reception of the two first Editions of the following Discourse has greatly exceeded the expectations of the author. He can however assert with much truth and sincerity, that though he is *far, very far*, from being indifferent to the public opinion, yet that a desire to preserve those who might be inclined to peruse it from a precipice of calamity and ruin was his leading and predominant motive. To have been instrumental in rescuing any *one* victim from the power and consequences of the habits of Gaming, to have awakened in any *one* instance either conjugal, parental, or filial affection, in the arresting the progress of this deadly contagion, is of infinitely greater importance to him than any judgment which may be passed on its merits as a composition.

Still, however, to the kind and candid construction of his readers, as well as to the judgment of some excellent and much esteemed friends, he owes some little explanation upon a point on which some objections, as he understands, have been made. He is supposed to have involved in one *common* and *undistinguishing* censure those innocent recreations which terminate merely in social amusement, and those atrocious practices by which the *formed Gamester* deals havock and ruin around him.—To this he can only answer, that he has been misunderstood—that nothing was farther from his intention. He meant not to assert

that amusements of this nature where mere *recreation* properly regulated, is the sole object, were to be universally proscribed; but that *extreme* care was to be taken ~~lest~~ the slenderness of the partitions which *peculiarly* in the present times divide the *amusement* of cards from the *vice of Gaming*, might be most distinctly and awfully discernible. He has advanced such leading PRINCIPLES upon this subject as he is assured are incontestible upon every ground of Holy Scripture, natural humanity, and political exigency. With *nice* and *enervating* distinctions he thought it beyond his province to deal. If his PRINCIPLES are admitted, it is for the judgment and conscience of his readers to apply them to *particular usages and practices*, as that judgment and that conscience, aided by God's grace, may direct. That they *may* so apply them as the security and true interests of themselves and those who are nearest and dearest to them demand at their hands, is the author's honest, hearty, and exclusive wish! He is far from putting in any claim, as far forth as he himself is concerned to advance religious truths of extraordinary rigor or severity. But *things and actions* must be represented as they *are*, and what was formerly said of *virtue* by an illustrious heathen, is equally applicable to christian courage and perfection. "Non ex aliorum neque ex nostrâ fortasse mollitiæ, sed ex ipsâ virtute de virtutis robore existimandum est."

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HEBREWS xii. 1.

"The Sin which doth so easily beset you."

TO comprehend in any system of religion or morality every deviation from the laws or rules which that system prescribes, is neither possible, nor should we upon reflection find it even to be expedient. So various are, not only the natural dispositions of individuals, but also so diversified those habits and practices which the different stages of manners, arts, and refinement produce, that an attempt to enumerate the vices growing eventually out of them would be inconsistent with that simplicity and conciseness which should accompany a collection of precepts adapted to the purposes, and directed to the instruction, of all mankind. Although therefore in the revealed will of God we do not find every mode and degree of crimes to which language has affixed

a specific name, yet a little inquiry will soon convince us that the morality of the Gospel stands beyond all comparison on a broader, simpler, and more practical basis than that of any other body of instruction, which under any form was ever proposed to the acceptance of mankind. Without the forced and artificial formality of a system, it hath all that coherence and harmonious concurrence which the ablest constructors of human systems of morality have never reached. Though the Evangelical precepts appear to slight observers scattered incidentally and occasionally, yet have they all mutual reference to each other, and an universal relation to the whole of that stupendous plan of mercy and reconciliation brought to light in the writings of the New Testament. When in the language of inspired wisdom the whole of man is displayed before us, when his corruptions, and their cause, and their remedy, are clearly discerned, when his destination in Time and Eternity distinctly appears, then is he raised to an eminence from whence the prospect of his duty is extensive and commanding indeed. Referred to such a view, the true nature of every action, and the minutest variation of it, is so clearly discerned, that even with regard to those habits and practices of which scarcely the slightest mention occurs,

we are at no loss whatever for a safe and easy determination. The grand Christian principles are so bold, distinct, and prominent, as to render them most easy in their construction, most safe and extensive in their application.

Though Christian casuistry lieth within a small compass, yet there is no part of human conduct which Christian obligation doth not reach, and where Christian motives do not operate. *Sophistry* may *evade*, Carelessness may neglect, Obstinacy may oppose, Vice may smother, both the precepts of the Gospel, and the grace of God which gives strength and efficacy to them. But all *mistakes* concerning our duty in judging of the consequences of our actions are almost invariably *wilful*, and this as much where the Scriptures are *silent* concerning particular offences, as where they directly advert to them. In the relaxation of amusement, in the hurry of public and political occupation, a VITAL CHRISTIAN is as much actuated by the motives of his religion, as in the prostrations of devotion, and the stillness of retirement. To all and every part of human life, a new direction is given by a genuine conversion of the Soul to God, nor is there a single thought of his heart, or action of his life, concerning which, either in its causes, dependencies, or consequences, the will of

God is not on Scriptural grounds most clearly discernible. To the tribunal of our Consciences, enlightened by his Word, and aided by his Grace, every action should be summoned by those who have effectual conviction that in so doing they anticipate the judgment of that tribunal, from which no word, thought, or deed can be exempted.

These observations, however plain and obvious, I have thought it proper to premise, in entering upon a subject of the highest, most awful, and most instant importance, namely, the nature and consequences of the prevailing habit of GAMING—because if we may conclude from daily observation, the operation of the plainest Christian principles seems in the controul of this vice to have been suspended in many instances where the authority of revelation is not openly disavowed, or even secretly discarded. I am completely convinced that if very many did not from the silence of Scripture derive some glimmerings of hope, that their accountability in this practice did not stand upon the same grounds as in other offences which are expressly named therein, they could not persist in a course of practising, cultivating, and diffusing a vice which is the parent of as extended guilt and misery as perhaps the most flagrant vices against which the indig-
nation

nation of God is nominally threatened.—Any *one* of those crimes, to which EVERY gamester in an advanced stage of the vice is necessarily and invariably either an accomplice or principal, would it might be supposed, either in their prospect, retrospect, or commission, strike the most obdurate heart with dismay and confusion. But here the callousness of custom, the strength of habit, and the extended prevalence of example, seem to have made a system of the most accumulated mischief and atrocity consistent with an assumption of character, with an apparently unruffled recollection, nay a profession of moral, and at times even of religious obligation. With such strong self-delusion in some, and such hardened reprobacy in others, it is difficult to contend. Every circumstance contributes to increase that difficulty. So indistinct is it in its first advances, so combined by habit with every part of social life, that it is hard to mark the first stages of its malignity, and still harder to separate it from those various and extended objects with which it is unfortunately blended.

To convert that which is the object of your eagerest pursuit, the employment of all your hours, the cement of all your supposed friendships, into your horror and detestation, to eradicate tempers of contrasted depravity, to

soften ferocity and to awaken indolence, to fix the frivolousness of dissipation, and to penetrate the gloom of despair, to substitute deep penitence into the place of the most hardened reprobacy, is an attempt which those who know not that the "STRENGTH" of God is perfected in the "WEAKNESS" of his MINISTERS, will perhaps treat with scorn and mockery: it is an attempt which those, who in defiance of every civil, social, and sacred obligation are spreading and diffusing this vice, will treat with the most marked virulence. But the Ministers of the Gospel have a duty to discharge of most important and awful urgency—of an urgency as pressing, as the ruin of every thing valuable in this life, and every hope in the next, is in these calamitous times imminent and menacing. In the discharge of this duty, notwithstanding every obstruction and discouragement, they look for the co-operation of all good men, and humbly hope for that all-powerful assistance which never fails to attend every sincere effort to lessen the guilt, the corruption, and the anguish of mankind.

In endeavouring to suggest to my hearers such reflections as may be effectual to awaken their caution and excite their abhorrence of the vice of Gaming, I propose to examine its progress and effects, as productive,

1st, Of the corruption, crimes, and misery of individuals, and

2dly, As at all times endangering, and very frequently subverting, the stability of civil order—considering it under the FIRST of these heads as completely destructive of every principle of CHRISTIAN piety in INDIVIDUALS; and under the second, of the salutary influence of SOCIAL and NATIONAL RELIGION, which secures the subordination, the peace, and the welfare of Communities.

Deeply I am convinced will every generous heart be sensible, that the corruption of the Individual is the Misery of the Individual; and that fordid and selfish habits not only contract the compass, but destroy the sources of true happiness. The more covertly these habits insinuate themselves, the greater is the danger. Now I assert, upon some observation, that in Gaming, the worst affections that can contaminate the heart of *Man*, insinuate themselves gradually and (in their early stages) imperceptibly, till the whole moral mass is irretrievably corrupted. We may say, that in affecting the Misery and Ruin of mankind, the “Serpent” retains his Scriptural character of “Subtlety.” The young and unwary have not in general the faintest conception of the vileness of those habits to which their ESTABLISHED PRECEPTORS

in this horrid career are forming and training them. The whole tenor of a Gamester's life demonstrates that to the blackest iniquity he is conducted by the most degrading meanness, and what is peculiar to this vice is, that the atrocity of guilt is rendered less striking by the sordid baseness which accompanies it, and that Horror is lessened by Contempt.

When we are capable of calm and moral reflection, when conscience can predominate over custom, what ARE the dispositions which occur to us in examining the recesses of a Gamester's heart? First and foremost, an inordinate LOVE OF LUCRE—and that the most sordid, fixed, and habitual, which, irritated every moment by renewed acts, in the end usurps a sovereign authority. Though in some instances those disorderly and licentious indulgences which are necessarily connected with the vice of Gaming, may interrupt or disguise, yet they never overcome this darling and primary propensity. Hence, where Gain solicits, not only the remains of every valuable principle is annihilated, but the united force of every bad one is suspended and superseded: Let the prospect of money start up to the Gamester, not only SHAME and VIRTUE retreat from the unequal contest; but even PRIDE stoops, and AMBITION dies.

Far-

Farther, to this sordid habit the Gamester, joins a disposition to FRAUD; and that of the meanest cast. To those who soberly and fairly appreciate the real nature of human actions, nothing appears more inconsistent than that societies of men, who have incorporated themselves for the express purpose of Gaming, should disclaim fraud or indirection, or affect to drive from their assemblies those among their associates whose crimes would reflect disgrace on them. Surely this to a considerate mind is as solemn and refined a banter as can well be exhibited: For when we take into view the vast latitude allowed by the most upright Gamesters, when we reflect that according to their precious casuistry every advantage may be legitimately taken of the young, the unwary, and the inebriated, which superior coolness, skill, address, and activity can supply, we must look upon pretences to honesty as a most shameless aggravation of their crimes. Even if it were possible that in his own practices a man might be a FAIR GAMESTER, yet for the result of the extended frauds committed by his fellows he stands deeply accountable to God, his Country, and his Conscience. To a system necessarily implicated with Fraud, to associations of men a large majority of whom subsist by Fraud, to habits calculated to poison the

the source and principle of all integrity, he gives efficacy, countenance, and concurrence. Even his virtues he suffers to be subsidiary to the cause of vice. He sees with calmness depredation committed daily and hourly in his company, perhaps under his very roof. Yet men of this description declaim (so desperately deceitful is the heart of Man) against the very Knaves they cherish and protect, and whom perhaps with some poor sophistical refuge for a worn-out conscience, they even imitate. To such let the Scripture speak with emphatical decision—"When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him." Away then with the mischievous distinction between fair and unfair gamesters; a distinction implying (in my poor opinion) only a very insignificant degree of guilt, a distinction invented and framed by the general enemy of mankind, to protect those who are doing his work and devoted to his service. In this instance even Heathen wisdom judged soundly and strongly. The most profound and sagacious observer of human actions (as far I mean as the imperfect light of Nature could carry him) assigns to Gamesters their true place and order in society.* He considers them without any distinction

* Aristoteles in *Ethicis Nicom.* The sentiments of this illustrious Sage are worthy of himself and of the attention

tion not only as plunderers, but affects with peculiar justice, that from more generous plunderers they are distinguished by the peculiar illiberality of their practices, and their selfish and sordid lust of gain. This great man had not learned the feeble and evasive casuistry which this age of apostacy has adopted, in opposition to much stronger light, and to much surer principles, than those which Providence had vouchsafed to him.

But I apprehend that men are not so disinterestedly mischievous. When those of high rank open their doors to men of this description, when they announce long before their invitations to such nocturnal associations, they will not seriously claim to be distinguished from the worst

of those who have prostituted their talents in the praise of Gamesters. Aristotle must have entertained very different opinions of the nature of *liberality* from those which are now current, for he utterly excludes all Gamesters from the *smallest* portion of it, even from that degree of it which other plunderers are not without.

“Τὸς μὲν γὰρ τὰ μεγάλα μὴ ὄφει δει, λαμβανοντας μὴδὲ αἰδει, ὅδε λεγομεν ἀνελευθερος· οἱσιν τοὺς τυραννοὺς, πόλεις πορνοῦντας, καὶ ἱερὰ συλῶντας, ἀλλὰ πονηροὺς μᾶλλον καὶ ἀσεβεῖς καὶ ἀδίκους. Ὁ μὲν τοι ΚΥΒΕΡΤΗΣ καὶ ὁ λωποδύτης, καὶ ὁ ληστής, τῶν ἀνελευθερῶν εἰσιν· αἰσχροκερδεῖς γὰρ. κερδὲς γὰρ ἐνεκα ἀμφοτεροὶ πραγματευονται, καὶ οὐκ ὀνειδὴ ὑπομένουσι· καὶ οἱ μὲν κινδυνεύουσιν τοὺς μεγιστοὺς ἐνεκα τοῦ λημματος. οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν φίλων κερδαίνουσιν, οἷς δει διδόναι. Ἀμφοτεροὶ δὲ ὄφει οὐδὲ κερδαίνειν βουλομενοὶ αἰσχροκερδεῖς· καὶ πασαι δὲ αἱ τοιαῦται ληψεῖς ἀνελευθεροί.”

worst of those they assemble. THIEVES* they are all, all who harbour, all who cherish them, not sparing even what the Arabian robber holds sacred—the tie of professed friendship, the confidence of unsuspecting youth, and the sacred rights of hospitality. Therefore the unwary should be well warned, that when Gamesters tender their friendship, § they offer what they are radically incapable of. They may be made first the dupes, and then the partners of their baseness: but such an union utterly precludes that noble one formed on the principles and directed to the practices of religion, virtue, and benevolence. If these are excluded, as surely they are by fraud and selfishness, there remains neither bond nor ground of confidence, either to individuals or societies. Let the young be assured, that when they plunge into intimacy with Gamesters, they take treachery and abjection to their bosoms IN EVERY INSTANCE: that whatever professions of generosity, or insinuation of address, or appearance of frankness, such men may find it convenient to adopt, these

**Define ab istis tuis, furacissimis moribus. Cyprianus de Alea.*

§ The friendship of Gamesters is described with great justice and animation by Cyprian—"Illic rabiosa amicitia, illic atrocissimi sceleris fraternitas discordans.—*Cyprianus ibidem.*

these artificial appendages are but part of their detestable trade, rendering them in the eye of reason and reflection ten thousand times more base, dangerous, and destructive.

But in addition to fraud and all its train of crimes, propensities and habits of a very different complexion enter into the composition of a Gamester; a most ungovernable FEROCITY OF DISPOSITION, however for a time disguised and latent, is invariably the result of his system of conduct. Jealousy, rage, and revenge exist among gamesters in their worst and most frantic excesses, and end frequently in consequences of the most atrocious violence and outrage. By perpetual agitation, the malignant passions spurn and overwhelm every boundary which discretion and conscience can oppose. From what source are we to trace a very large number of those murders, sanctioned or palliated indeed by custom, but which stand at the tribunal of God precisely upon the same grounds with every other species of murder?—From the Gaming-table, from the nocturnal receptacles of distraction and frenzy, the Duelist rushes with his hand lifted up against his brother's life! Those who are as yet on the threshold of these habits should be warned, that however calm their *natural* temperament, however meek and placable their disposition, yet that by the events, which

which every moment arise, they stand exposed to the ungovernable fury of themselves and others. In the midst of fraud, protected by menace on the one hand, and on the other, of despair, irritated by a recollection of the meanesses of the artifices and the baseness of the hands by which utter and remediless ruin has been inflicted, in the midst of these feelings of horror and distraction, it is that the voice of brethren's blood "crieth unto God from the ground"—"and now thou art cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand."—Not only THOU who actually sheddest that blood, but THOU who art the artificer of death—thou who administereest incentives to these habits—who disseminatest the practice of them--improvest the skill in them—sharpenest the propensity to them—at THY hands will it be required, surely, at the tribunal of God in the next world, and perhaps in most instances in his distributive and awful dispensations towards thee and thine here on earth.

But whatever activity the **MALIGNANT PASSIONS** may derive from such habits, the benevolent affections, on the contrary, are more impaired by gaming than it is possible to conceive or calculate. The reasons are obvious; the misery which an habitual Gamester suffers, hazards,

hazards, and occasions, must render him com-
 pletely and systematically callous. Without a
 single sentiment of remorse or compassion, he
 coolly and designedly inflicts utter and irre-
 trievable mischief on the greater part of those
 with whom he is conversant. What though
 every day he lives he wrings the heart of many
 a fond wife, many an helpless orphan, many
 an aged parent, by effecting the rapid and in-
 stantaneous ruin of those to whom they looked
 up for support and comfort: what though the
 wretched Suicide, unable to bear the compli-
 cated agonies of those whose affections nature
 has wound closest round his heart, leaves
 them to deplore his loss in this world, and his
 DESPERATE STATE in that into which he pre-
 cipitated himself; what though of all such hor-
 rors HE is the witness, the cause, and the ac-
 complice; what though he is the patron and
 legislator of the system which diffuses them;
 yet, with all this, HE remains calm, easy, and
 collected. A superficial politeness, an ac-
 quaintance with the habits of what is common-
 ly called the World, and an adroit application
 to the foibles of those with whom these men
 consort, may draw a thin veil over the fixed
 relentlessness of a Gamester's mind. He may
 pretend (for human pretences are indefinite)
 to feeling, honor, sentiment, words coined
 for

for the purpose either of concealing vice, or dressing it up in virtue's garb. But as I principally address myself to those who may be exposed to such men and to such artifices, be assured that to human pangs Gamesters' hearts are essentially impenetrable. They recount, in all the callous flippancy of fashionable conversation, the miserable fates of those whom they or their associates have consigned to misery; and language itself is distorted and depraved in order to invent words to express their diabolical cant and unfeeling jargon, and to intercept those emotions of indignation against the patrons, and of pity for the victims, of this system of crimes and calamities, which would naturally arise in the heart of man upon hearing these tales of woe and wickedness told with seriousness and simplicity. If therefore you would preserve that best part of your frame which most distinguishes you from the beasts which perish, if you would retain even that wreck of virtue which survives in some degree perhaps almost every OTHER course of iniquity, leaving still that kindly disposition of "weeping with those that weep," fly the haunts, dread the habits, and abhor the VERY LANGUAGE of Gamesters.

But it is not only general Philanthropy, but even that more powerful principle of Natural

Affec-

affection, which this vice stifles in many instances, and injures in all. To be without "natural affection" was one of the most prominent features of those calamitous times of reproach and apostacy which the prophetic spirit of the great Apostle so distinctly foresaw and so powerfully delineated. Where Gaming is general this is a constant concomitant; for what pretences can a Gamester make to the smallest degree of affection and duty to those whom he exposes every hour he lives to afflictions worse than death itself? Were his conscience for a moment to awake, how would he be reproached by the bare sight of those whose hopes and interests he embarks upon the single cast of a die, from whom he suffers the vilest of mankind to wrest even the bed upon which they repose, and the morsel of bread which supports their existence! whom he not only exposes to such calamity, when it actually befalls them, but to the unspeakable agony of a fearful expectation of it every hour they live. But even this cruelty of the Gamester is small in comparison to that by which he communicates his guilt. The sudden stroke of poverty, bitter as it is, where innocence accompanies it, may be softened by the lenient *dispensations* of an Almighty Protector. But what are the hearts of those Gamesters who train up their progeny in

in their GUILT, who accustom their innocent, uncorrupted minds to the daily spectacle of fraud and pillage!

Let those who as yet only stand on the brink of this misery, those who consider these meetings as AMUSEMENTS, or who comply with them merely that they may not be excluded from fashionable society, think to what poor motives they expose those innocent pledges which a kind Providence has entrusted to them. Has entrusted to them for what?—to be the joy of their youth, the pride of their maturer years, the comfort of their age, and their alleviation even in the pangs of death. To be trained up to what?—to be the benefactors of mankind, servants of the great and high God, and partakers with them of a glorious immortality.

To these purposes I will boldly assert that all tampering with the vice of Gaming, in every stage of it, is always dangerous, and most frequently destructive. You will say you do not GAME—that you mix only with such society that you may not appear strange—that you can always restrain yourself from hazarding more than your circumstances will permit. To grant all these pleas, which would be sufficiently absurd, yet are you sure that your CHILDREN will have all this moderation, that THEY, when once habituated to such company, and introduced

ced into such receptacles, will not be corrupted, pillaged, and undone? Do you REALLY expect that having early acquired the relish and skill, which a repetition of these scenes naturally produce, as they advance in years they will stop short of ruin and guilt? Can you, for the poor ambition of consorting with men of fashion, for the tinsel gratification of exhibiting your taste, prepare your dwellings for the reception and harbour of that large mixture of privileged thieves, which I am credibly informed constitute a part of such assemblies? Do not think me obtrusive in appealing to that kindly virtue which is last eradicated from the human heart. Can you CALMLY destroy all the part which you yourselves have, all the part which God has, in those whom you now look on with the eye of parental rapture? Are you reconciled to beholding them as “VESSELS FITTED FOR DESTRUCTION?” If you cannot, retreat instantaneously from the brink of the precipice on which both you, and your beloved children stand. Think that in all these scenes which every day announces to us as exhibiting in the politer part of the Metropolis, when rank and elegance combine their powerful and fascinating delusions, when every external decoration which art and splendor can devise, is subsidiary to them--think that in the midst of these seductive scenes, you see
Ruin,

Ruin, Fraud, Beggary, and untimely Death—think that you see the hand of the SUICIDE lifted against himself, and that SUICIDE your OWN DARLING CHILD! Gone forward to the bar of eternal justice as a swift witness against the AUTHORS OF HIS EXISTENCE, for having early sown in him the seeds of temporal destruction and eternal death—and THEN, if possible, think the faithful Ministers of Christ too importunate when they exhort you to flee, in the *early stages* of these calamities, as for your lives, when they warn you, even in those habits which to careless and unthinking minds appear of an indifferent tendency, not to spurn the dictates of Nature and Conscience, and to expose those whom God has consigned to your protection and care to the floodgates of such wickedness, anguish, and desolation!

Shall we farther explore the complicated baseness of the Gamester's mind, or does disgust recoil from the examination of that polluted mansion? If this disgust is excited, I shall by God's grace have discharged no mean part of the arduous and difficult task I have undertaken.

I will mention but *one* more of those dispositions which have appeared to me constantly to have been associated to the character of a Gamester—a quality which gives consistence and

and permanence to all the rest, that is, a fixed, calm, and temperate IMPUDENCE, diffusing itself over every part of his conduct and deportment. This qualification is thought of so much consequence by the preceptors in this vice, as to be a matter of regular training and institution. And wise are they in their generation, for SHAME IS MORAL VITALITY; where THAT survives, every pollution is delible, and every habit recoverable. Consequently with it every Gamester is in a regular state of warfare; for was he capable of feeling his own degradation, the sight of an honest man must overwhelm him with intolerable confusion. But to every internal feeling of baseness, and every external *circumstance of infamy*, he is completely reconciled*. Though he not only knows himself, but is convinced that every thinking man knows him likewise, yet under the protection of this peculiar qualification we shall find him occasionally and familiarly using the words FRIENDSHIP, BENEVOLENCE, PITY, and PHILANTHROPY, and at times assuming

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* It was probably a conviction of the vileness and contented infamy of Gamesters, which induced some of the most esteemed commentators on the Roman law to assert the *inadmissibility of their Evidence* in a Court of Justice. This opinion is supported with great ability and force of reasoning by *Mascardus de Probationibus*, vol. 2. p. 262.

ming a high perfection of them, and what is still more extraordinary, we may observe the unthinking multitude with a mischievous and indolent acquiescence admitting such a claim.

But I have hitherto considered only the effects which the habit of Gaming uniformly, and almost without exception, produces upon those principles of moral virtue and natural conscience, of which even Heathen wisdom was not devoid. But of all the **DISTINGUISHING DOCTRINES** and all the **VITAL ENERGIES** of the blessed Gospel of Christ, the practice of Gaming is in its most distant stages, and in every practice which approximates to it, radically destructive. It is possible for men to make some cautious and skilful advances in it without ruining their **FORTUNES OR REPUTATION**, but with their interest and their hopes as **CHRISTIANS**, and with every principle of inward piety, it is utterly irreconcilable. First of all what is, or ought to be, the employment of the **TIME** of a Christian, a creature redeemed from sin and eternal death, and “born again after the image of Him who created him”—carrying about with him (in the awful words of an eloquent Father of the Church)* the sense of mortality

* *Homo circumferens mortalitatem suam circumferens testimonium peccati sui!*—*Augustini Confessiones*.

mortality and testimony of guilt—for whom “the Eternal Spirit is making intercessions with groans which cannot be uttered”—of a creature, whose prayers and penitence, contrition and charity, are to fill up the short span and precarious term of an earthly existence? Surely he must be guilty of a most TREMENDOUS MOCKERY of Almighty GOD and his SON’S Gospel who can assert, that with this state, with these views and motives, an employment of nearly the HALF of every day he lives in CARDS AND DICE is consistent or compatible. Is it indeed THUS that we are to pass through a miserable and guilty world! the GUILT of which, and the MISERY of which, every Christian’s time and exertions are called forth to remedy. Remember this STRONG and PREGNANT evangelical principle, *that “ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price,”* Now, with these views, look back upon your past life, look forward to your future. If you have recorded your time, examine those records. What do they exhibit—memorials of your alms and prayers, or your dedication and devotion by night and by day to occupations which can be in their best stages but trifling and unprofitable? Look at your acts of benevolence and your labours of love—in instructing the ignorant, in relieving the afflicted, in visiting the prisoner, in

endeavouring to lessen that sum of corruption and guilt with which this poor short state is deluged. From these duties, or rather from these consolations, * and from those heavenly tears which constitute an earnest and anticipation of the bliss of Heaven, this miserable and frivolous employment of your time completely precludes you. No other pleasure, no other vice so entirely ingulphs the life of a Christian as this—none is so accessible at all times—so adapted to every variety of age, situation, rank, and understanding. Let me beseech you to bear the word of exhortation and admonition, be convinced that to the guilt of Gaming they are clearly obnoxious whose *hours* alone are sacrificed to it. It is not only those who risk much of their property that deserve the appellation of Gamblers, it is not those only who defraud their guests or companions—it is those also who cheat God of their time, their Redeemer of their affections, Man of their exertions, and risk their salvation on the issue of such a miserable mispent life.

But it is not merely that *Time* is wasted, and *Thought* withdrawn from *Religion*, but habits are acquired by these means which generate an

INVI-

* In the exquisite language of Basil—

Ἡ τοῦ δακρυῶν τὴν τοιοῦτον στερῆμα καὶ δακρυῶν τῆς αἰωνίου χάριτος,"

—Basilii Homilia de Gratiarum Actione.

INVETERATE AVERSION to it. AVERSION to Religion soon follows the NEGLECT of it in most cases, but in this instance commences and is co-ordinate with it. I do not pretend to any very wide experience in human life, but I scarcely ever knew any single person who made any considerable progress in games of skill, but that in proportion to the exercise of that skill, his disinclination and disgust of Religion grew with it. Not only is religious principle supplanted, but a principle of the highest stage of contrast is supplied in its stead. Examine (you that have calmness and capacity) yourselves and your neighbours—look not only at the haunts of Gamesters, but at those contemptible and mischievous meetings, where indolence and vacancy find their daily refuge in Cards. In the midst of these, let the slightest mention be made of the real religious state of Man, of his redemption by Christ, of his state of misery and calamity prior to that redemption, of the awful looking-for of everlasting destruction to which every irreconciled sinner is exposed, with what scorn and mockery, with what affected banter and real disgust would any such mention be treated. Miserable deluded Beings! Do you think that the expression of “*always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,*” of “*passing the time of your sojourning*”

here in FEAR" are precepts, like those of the stoics of old, founded on impracticable paradoxes, or that they are the commands of God who supplieth Power to all those who have the Will to practise them? But you will say Devotion and Prayer have their intervals. I grant it, but not intervals of doing mischief, not intervals of sowing the seeds of vices, which in farther stages of their progress scatter destruction and misery, not intervals which every time they occur render you more and more indisposed to the Word, to the Worship, and to the Dispensations of Almighty God. But be fair with yourselves—with what PAIN is it that you who are thus engaged, particularly as you proceed in those courses, recur not only to SPIRITUAL, but even to FORMAL devotion? The very few stated decencies, those poor wrecks of Religion, which this age of Apostacy has left, are grown intolerable to you. I wish to be understood to speak of the employment of *Thought*, as I did of the employment of *Time*, that this shipwreck of our Christian principles commences at a period long before the generality of men will allow that they are at all tainted with the vice of Gaming. The mind of one immersed in Cards soon becomes vacant, frivolous, and captious. The habits form a strange mixture of mock gravity and pert flippancy.

The

The understanding, by a perpetual attention to a variety of unmeaning combinations, acquires a kind of pride in this bastard employment of the faculty of thought, which is so far from having any analogy to the real exercise of reason, that we generally find a miserable eminence in it attainable by the dullest, most ignorant, and most contemptible of mankind. The Gamester however frequently mistakes this skill for general acuteness, and from that conceit either totally rejects the Gospel evidence, or if political or professional considerations render this indecent or inexpedient, he harbours all that contemptible chicane, all that petty sophistry, all that creeping evasion, with which a selfish heart, and a contracted understanding, meets and embraces the prevailing heresy of the times in which we live *; degrading the dignity,

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* The Connection between the artifices of Gamesters, and the shifting depravity of Heretical subterfuge, is strongly marked by the Apostle—

——“περιφερομενοι παντι ανεμω της διδασκαλιας εν τη ΚΥΒΕΙΑ των ανδρων.” Ephes. iv. 14.

This same Analogy was so striking as to attract the notice of various commentators on this passage in the early ages of the Christian Church. Thus Oecumenius in cap. iv. ad Ephesios.——

“ΚΥΒΕΤΤΑΙ λογων λεγονται οι μεν ποτε τελη, ποτε δε εκεινο διδασκοντες και μεταβαινοντες αιει απο τωτ εις τωτο πανουργως. Τειουτοι οι ΑΙΠΕΤΙΚΟΙ.

enervating the motives; and destroying the consolations of the Cross of Christ. If therefore a Gamester ever makes profession of Religion, it is with such teachers and with such doctrines that he finds his mind most congenial. To real Christianity and its Ministers his enmity is lasting and virulent, because these are in strong and direct opposition to his favorite vice. But it is seldom that he stops here. As the crimes with which Gaming is connected are destructive of every *detached portion* of Christian piety, so is the *general habit* to the *whole spirit* of it. There is scarcely a positive precept of Christianity which is not violated in the course of a Gamester's career. Trust in Providence is expelled by a course of action, in which though he embarks perpetually his most important interest, he dares not look up in any stage to God for favour or protection. Can he "set God always before him;" that God whose name and whose Gospel are never mentioned by him but to give energy to imprecation, or zest to mockery? As contrary therefore as *Dignity* is to *Baseness*, *Pity* to *Callousness*, *Calmness* to *Distraction*, *Fraud* to *Integrity*, *Revenge* to *Placability*, *Hope* to *Despair*, so contrary is Gaming to the spirit and tenor of Religion in ALL its degrees and modifications. I am convinced that the justice of these

these observations will not be contested by the ADEPTS in this vice, who would receive with a smile of apathy any suggestions of their guilt as Christians.

But the point I wish to labour, and the effect I principally have in view in this representation, is to warn those who are in distant stages of the same progress, and who have not yet calmly acquiesced in a surrender of every hope and consolation of Religion. To such I would say in much affection, and in the face of the unpopularity which such doctrines may occasion, that all occupations of this kind render man *guilty* before God at a time when both fashion and custom pronounce them *innocent*. That the very design of those flippant miserable meetings is, to intercept all the awful views which it is the purpose of Religion to display, and to annihilate the habits which a Christian should form. I should further suggest, that with the *incipient* stages of this vice, all the *subsequent* ones are connected. The skill acquired, and the principles sown, while *diversion* only is in view, soon expand themselves into the adult and vigorous growth of guilt and profligacy, which defies both God and Man. Against all excesses you protest, but for those excesses you assimilate the soil, you trench the ground, you scatter the seed; and are you not answerable

for the *increase*? Permit me to assure you, that if for the sake of a trifling and degrading amusement, you are prepared to disseminate this mischief both temporal and eternal, you exhibit in your OWN PERSONS the most overbearing instance of that brutal and unfeeling texture of mind which these miserable habits soon produce. Remember therefore the saying of him who warns you that between such practices and every religious obligation “THERE IS A GREAT GULF FIXED;” that in endeavouring to reconcile a life addicted to them with the smallest portion of religious hope, you are trifling with your conscience most palpably and egregiously.

Art thou a CHRISTIAN then and devoted to these things? * Be not deceived by the *levity* of these meetings, but esteem them to be most *awfully* and essentially wicked. Look at the miseries of the latter end of a Gamester’s career, and dread them for thyself and thy CHILDREN: For I can venture to assure thee, that as no other course of crimes is attended with a more obstinate and obdurate scorn and contempt of God’s Word, His Worship, and His Providence, so there is none against which the vengeance

* Aleator quicunque es & Christianum te dicis? —

Cyprianus *ibidem*.

geance of Heaven is more keenly and visibly exerted, nor any in which the punishment more quickly and invariably follows the crime. A day, perhaps an hour, reverses plenty, security, and credit, into penury, ignominy, and despair, aggravated by the unutterable anguish of having drawn those whom they ought to have supported and protected into the same gulph of destruction. The punishment of the Gamester, like that of CAIN of old, is "*greater than he can bear.*" Either the pangs of his recollection drive him to that last fatal act for which "*no place for repentance*" is found, or he drags on a fordid existence, supported by decoying others into the same snares by which his own ruin has been effected, carrying about with him a MORAL WRECK (for such is the breast of every Gamester) till the measure of his iniquity is full. O reflect then in time! "*that which a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*"—Think how improbable it is, that you who have carelessly and wantonly sacrificed every principle of duty to God, and benevolence to Man, to a poor wretched *amusement*, should escape his awful and tremendous justice. If for *this* thou canst brave the fears of final impenitence in this world, and of everlasting destruction in the next, the Apostle only can speak with the energy of divine grace to thy leared conscience.

—“*O wretched Man that thou art, who shall deliver Thee from the body of this death !*”

I have now, with all seriousness, endeavoured distinctly to point to those effects which I have observed to be produced by the vice of Gaming on INDIVIDUALS, it remains for me to consider its consequences as they affect the stability and order of CIVIL GOVERNMENT, and the public and social influence of the HOLY RELIGION we profess.

In entering upon this part of my subject, I would not be thought to acquiesce in that mischievous distinction, invented by Knaves and current only with Fools ; a distinction I mean between PRIVATE and PUBLIC morals, as if any vice or mode of immorality could exist, which doth not by *some channel* convey its poison to the body politic. In some instances the mischief done is slow and circuitous, not producing a visible effect till the accumulated accessions of many generations have ripened and matured these deadly seeds. But the vice of gaming strikes *immediately* at the vitals of publick virtue, public order, and public happiness. The connection between causes and effects are *here* direct and palpable. It gives vigour, efficacy, and activity to every other public vice, communicating and receiving reciprocal support. To the receptacles

cles of Gamesters, luxury, debauchery, and extravagance, fly for refuge and recovery from that ruin which unbridled libertinism has entailed upon them. On the contrary, to drown the pangs of remorse and keen anguish of conscience, the Gamester plunges by intervals into the foulest abyss of sensuality and riot. Hence follows the most deplorable corruption amongst Those whose bias and determination to Good or Evil, is the protection or ruin of a WHOLE COMMUNITY. To the integrity and independence of men of rank and opulence, a free state looks for whatever is upright in conduct, sound in determination, safe in practice, and beneficial in consequence. The greater the number of such men who fill either the executive departments of a State, or who partake of the office of Legislators, the greater the stability of that country. Should it fall to the lot of such men to project political measures, it will be done with foresight and reflection—should it be their province to examine or even to oppose those planned by others, that examination and opposition will be conducted with firmness, devoid of acrimony, and will be of such a mitigated nature as never to endanger the safety of the whole. The consciousness of integrity will supply calmness, and the deep interest they have in the welfare of their

their country, will ensure caution and discretion in all their movements and designs. But what is it that lessens the number of such invaluable members of society? What is it that converts Those designed by Providence to be the GUARDIANS and PROTECTORS, into the BANE and CURSE of their Country? I will answer—the GAMING TABLE. The reverses here every moment occurring, unite beggared fortunes, mortified pride, callous baseness, and enflamed appetites, directing their joint operations to the destruction of that common mother which gave them birth.—And here I wish to be rightly understood—that with a frugal, active, dignified poverty, the discharge of public duty is perfectly compatible. Such a poverty was highly revered in the best ages of Pagan antiquity, as the nurse of every great and useful exertion: but as distant as light from darkness is such a poverty from that degraded, malevolent, abject MENDICITY, the offspring of vice, the organ of faction, and the parent of universal prostitution and venality. To preserve the most venerable council of the nation from the mischiefs and disgrace accruing from such members, was one of the most important functions of the Censorian Magistracy in ancient Rome *. To those

Magis-

* “ Every Lustrum, i. e. at the end of every fifth year,

Magistrates were committed the power of removing those Senators who had reduced themselves to indigence by profligacy or extravagance. Similar instances of wise caution are to be traced in the Athenian polity, which abundantly provided checks against those whose prodigality and beggary might make their interference in public affairs dangerous or prejudicial. It is difficult indeed to conceive what interest any one ruined by a course of vice can have in the welfare of his country : It is still more difficult to conceive that this regard should exist in Gamesters. Any claim to patriotism in such men, furnishes perhaps one of the most STUPENDOUS instances of impudence in asserting, and of dupery in admitting it, which the records of human folly and depravity any where exhibit. For not only do they, by the misapplication of their *own* talents, and the operation of their *own* malignant passions, deeply injure that country which they so vehemently and loudly profess to

the Senate was reviewed by one of the Censors, and if any one had rendered himself unworthy of that high rank, or *had sunk his fortune below that of a Senator*, his name was passed over by the Censor in reading the roll of Senators ; and thus he was held to be excluded from the Senate.”—*Vide Adams's accurate and well digested System of Roman Antiquities, p. 6.*—*Vide also Æschines in Timarcum passim.*

to serve, but by drying up the vital sources of public integrity, deprive it of that future harvest of virtue, to which its fondest expectations were directed. For it is always observable, that the Principals in this vice soon enlist large troops of accomplices in their service, by spreading among the noble and opulent youth their crimes, misery, and despondency, uniting them in similar views and associations for the same detestable ends. In viewing the desolation spread by such men, in considering the base incitements with which they pre-occupy the ingenuous hearts of the rising generation, and reconcile them to their trade and infection, the watchfulness with which they select their victims and disciples in the earliest stages of manhood, in beholding the rising hopes of our country so blighted and blasted, well may we say of our unhappy land—" *In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning! Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not.*" More wretched still than that disconsolate mourner! Happier they who weep the death of their *departed*, than they who feel the parricidal wounds inflicted by their *degenerate* offspring!

It is only in such schools that can be formed that true callousness which can anticipate all the

the calamities of civil discord with the calmest indifference, which having long dealt in private, can extend its efforts to national ruin and pillage. This transition is easy and natural: such in all ages have been those by whom the peace of flourishing and free communities have been disturbed, their properties invaded, and their liberties destroyed. These are they who, under the mask of patriotism, pant for civil convulsion and proscription, for which the whole texture of their habits have previously disposed them. While therefore men of this description abound, it is utterly impossible that any State can be in permanent security, it is impossible that those principles of subordination, which are essential to the happiness of Mankind, can be maintained while many in the higher orders are given to this destructive habit. Those who wish for anarchy and misery, those to whom public prosperity is a source of despair, and public confusion an object of hope and exultation, act wisely and consistently enough when they encourage and promote this horrible contagion. The beggary, the degradation, the despair, the malignancy of those whom they assemble and associate, are their natural weapons, and render them fit instruments of their plunging and atrocious projects. The young men into whose in-

intimacy they insinuate themselves, cannot be the organs of their purposes, till their habits are debased, their property pillaged, and their consciences obliterated. This it is which has united so many among us, in the furtherance of those abandoned principles of anarchy and sedition, which are the natural consequences of that mass of vices, of which Gaming is the corner-stone.

This it is which has for many years past been preparing the materials for that tremendous conflagration which threatens every nation in Europe, and has already overwhelmed the most flourishing, populous, and civilized of its kingdoms. Of ruined gamblers we are told that the crew of Cataline was principally composed*; and recent observation, drawn from the best attested facts, will inform us, that amidst all the unparelled crimes which the miserable Revolution in France has produced, this has been in its turn the cause, and in its turn the effect, of them all. To the Gaming Table, I am told by eye-witnesses,

* This sufficiently appears from the invaluable account which Sallust has transmitted to us of the Catalinarian conspiracy, many parts of which unfortunately appear to be rather a *description* of *present* than a *history* of *past* events. "Quicumque impudicus, adulter, ganeo, ALEA manu, ventre bona patria laceraverat quique alienum æs grande conflaverat—Hi Catalinæ proximi familiaresque erant." De Bello Catalinario.

nesses, was regularly brought the fruits of public confiscation, cruelty, and proscription.

Those therefore who have the same views and designs, whom no experience of the guilt and misery which such principles have spread in that devoted land which gave them birth, those who have steeled their breasts to the groans, the anguish, and the destruction of their countrymen, act conformably to their views and character in practising and encouraging that vice, which, above all others, assists their predatory and sanguinary projects. BUT it is most astonishing *indeed*, that those who have a remaining interest in the welfare of their Country, who have humanity unextinguished, who have loyalty to their Prince in their hearts, and love of order and constitutional liberty yet unimpaired, should not see and avow the absolute necessity of immediately withdrawing from every avenue to this accursed vice, and from those associations which in the full order of legislative and preceptive form teach the principles and arrange the practice of it. Such should be well aware, that while this pestilence is in its vigour, neither the wisest counsels can long protract, nor the most active exertions finally avert the evils which threaten us. Here, therefore, ruin *must* be resisted—here only it *can* be resisted.

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Before the lower ranks of men can be brought back to that respect for their superiors which can alone ensure peace and happiness both to high and low, they must cease to render themselves vile in the eyes of men by the degradation, the beggary, and the meanness which the Gaming Table entails upon them. They must abandon their base companions and nocturnal haunts, and return to the native munificence and generosity which in times of old endeared them to the poor and needy, and were the firmest barrier of their property and privileges. Oh that the Great could but "in this their day of visitation" hear the friendly voice of one, whose life and ministry have been uniformly dedicated to promote those principles of loyalty and subordination which it is the purpose of the enemies of this country to vilify and subvert! Oh that they could be aware how much, by their indulgencies in this favorite vice, they further the designs of those whose malignant activity is evidently directed to plunder, confiscation, and anarchy!

But in none of the effects of Gaming is a more deadly wound inflicted, than by the utter destruction of that principle of NATIONAL Religion, without which the whole structure of social order dissolves and perishes. I know how fertile this age of innovation in which we live

live is of new opinions and sentiments upon the connection between Religion and Government: But whatever the pertness of paradox may object, the voice of the most venerable antiquity, both sacred and profane, combines with the awful experience of recent and striking events in assuring us, that when the chain which unites the creature to the Creator is broken and interrupted, when Law is separated from the SOURCE OF LEGISLATION, then union is impossible, and dissolution inevitable. Religion as it is the perfection of individuals, so is it the preservation of communities. Whatever therefore counteracts its effects, and obstructs its progress, strikes at the very vitals of civil society. But neither the sophistry of infidelity, the refinements of luxury, or the lures of pleasure, have contributed so much to wrest all awe of God from the minds of men, as this single vice of Gaming. I now speak of social Religion, beginning with families, and extending itself through various gradations to more comprehensive associations, till it embraces that most enlarged community, which may be denominated national or political.

And first, what is it which has disturbed that beautiful appearance of family piety, which was of old the ornament of our English nation, and constituted part of its public character :

rafter: when each morning and evening the master of a family assembled with a patriarchal and primeval dignity his children and domestics, to praise the Author of the abundant blessings showered down upon them? How every relation and dependency derived reciprocal sanctity and force! How this salutary practice contributed through the channels of private principle to augment the stock of public happiness and security! But now instruction and admonition are no more! These pious exercises are supplanted by the occupation of Cards and Dice; in this occupation the NIGHT frequently closes, while numerous trains of domestics are abandoned to all the profaneness, debauchery, and corruption, which the streets of a luxurious and profligate Metropolis exhibits. Thus is God deserted in the first instance. But who are they who break in upon his Sabbath, that last bulwark of decaying religion which still remains? I too well know the loose and licentious doctrines which have been disseminated with regard to the observance of this sacred day, which God (by the first command given to Man) consecrated to his worship and the uninterrupted meditation on his word. I have heard with infinite pain, the strict observation of this day (that peculiar glory of the PROTESTANT RE-

LIGION,

RELIGION, that duty in which the English Church has been most eminent and exemplary) censured as overstrained and puritanical. I have heard all abstinence from amusement represented as gloomy and melancholy, and opinions broached on this subject which would soon precipitate this nation into the same depth of Apostacy in which a neighbouring country is plunged. With such an indifference to the misery of mankind, and to the judicial dispensations of Almighty God, it is in vain to contend: But to those who *still* feel for *themselves* and *others*, I would with all eagerness suggest, that of all habits which withdraw Men from the public furtherance of Religion on this day, Gaming is among the foremost—I would say, that, as to desert the worship of Almighty God for such diversions, is a mark of the most flagrant Apostacy: so any attempt to reconcile an attendance upon the one, with a practice of the other, is a most insulting mockery of the commands of God. It is to sap the foundations of all Religion in those who are within the sphere of your influence; it is to devote those who among the lower ranks are corrupted by your example to the pangs and ignominy of an untimely death, which a violation of the Sabbath is well known in its consequences to draw down upon them.

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May Almighty God, by his preventing grace, bring it home to the hearts of all those in the higher ranks, who carelessly or contemptuously devote themselves to this practice on the Sabbath, how they will wish, when their great account is to be given in the hour of death and the day of judgment, that they had been, "*innocent of the blood of all men.*"

But the greatest mischief this accursed vice can effect is when any considerable portion of those whose labours are dedicated to the sacred Ministry should ever be overcome by its contagion. With all the dignity, the power, the energy and efficacy of professional character, the vice of Gaming is in every degree and in every mode utterly incompatible. To any of its encroachments the Catholic Church, thro' the whole current of pure and primitive antiquity, opposed a most dignified resistance: It turned with an awful and averted front from those of its degenerate children upon whom the slightest contamination rested; it prohibited under the severest penalties even the presence of its Ministers at scenes where their virtue and fidelity were so deeply endangered. Neither has that sound and eminent part of it, our English Church, which both in its doctrines and discipline doth not want a true Apostolical seal, been backward in its censures. To

To the large portion of pious and exemplary Ecclesiastics, who really love those doctrines they teach, and the Master whom they serve, I am convinced that God in his Scriptures, and Christ in his Church, will not, cannot speak in vain. At all times for Dice and Cards, even were they of a nature which did not derogate from the dignity of our high vocation and ministry, we have, or ought to have very few intervals. We have in the best ages much vice to reform, much calamity to comfort, much ignorance to enlighten, much wilfulness to subdue—but, O gracious God! in these times how is the arduous task increased, how are our best exertions called for—to recover from Atheism and Anarchy a perishing and sinking world, to counteract those seeds of revolt from God, which have shaken the foundations of civil society, and deluged Europe with seas of human blood—how intense should be our charity, how fervent our aspirations, how wakeful our conduct, how incessant our prayers! But I will leave it to the consideration of every reflecting man, how by a perpetual devotion of our time to cards and amusements, we intercept those awful views of sin and calamity from ourselves and others, which alone can give energy to our labours. It becomes us to be well aware that our habits should be formed,

our hearts prepared, our views enlarged, and our resolution strengthened, for all that we may be called upon to *do*, and all that Providence may destine us to *suffer*, in support of that faith we profess, and that Gospel which we preach. In particular, let not THESE SACRED RETREATS, the monuments of ancient piety and munificence, be degraded by a *silly affectation* of fashionable manners and fashionable vices, and peculiarly of "*that Sin which doth so easily beset us.*"—Prayer and meditation, study and retirement, charity and dignified hospitality, are *equally* excluded, by a constant round of cards and dissipation. Oh may these ORNAMENTAL, these NOBLE, and when applied to their proper ends these USEFUL institutions, never be brought into disrepute by the folly and fault of a few. Let me not seem in this "*as one that mocketh,*" for I cannot but think that every serious Minister of Christ must consider this awful passage of St. Paul as exhibiting a strong analogy to the present circumstances of himself and his brethren—"for I think God hath set forth the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the World, and to Angels, and to Men." I must suggest, that to such a situation even the *distraction* of the generality of amusements is sufficiently uncongenial and indecorous—

decorous—much more the prevalence of ONE, which I firmly believe has contributed more in its consequences and dependencies to overwhelm the earth with confusion and bloodshed, than the united force of all the powers of HELL and DARKNESS. May the Ministers of Christ, with enlarged hearts, purified affections, and humble penitence, meet all the high duties which the times impose, and face all those dangers which they threaten! May we either be thought worthy, as the Levitical Priesthood, to “*stand between the dead and the living, and the plague be ceased;*” or if God shall, in his inscrutable decrees, have thrown us on those times when “*the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,*” may we be able to possess our souls in firm resignation, and unshaken hope, looking according unto his promise for “*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*”



TO CONCLUDE.

Happy they who have escaped the pollutions of the world by sin in this important point! Happy they whom the powerful and controuling GRACE of God (without which all *moral precepts* are but a dead letter) has arrested in these courses, convincing them of "*the things appertaining unto their peace before they are hid from their eyes for ever!*"

But thrice happy they whom elevation of rank, splendour of station, and the possession of extended property, have enabled to contribute a powerful and decisive influence in checking this wretched career of guilt and woe! Who, in the service of God and of Mankind, have discountenanced habits, and sacrificed amusements, apparently innocent, to this great, this glorious, this benevolent purpose! THIS will give them unspeakable consolation and joy at those tremendous moments, when all earthly distinctions shall cease, and all earthly pleasures are for ever passed and gone. "*They shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*"